

# Chavacano

**Chavacano** or **Chabacano** [tʃaba'kano] is a group of Spanish-based creole language varieties spoken in the Philippines. The variety spoken in Zamboanga City, located in the southern Philippine island group of Mindanao, has the highest concentration of speakers. Other currently existing varieties are found in Cavite City and Ternate, located in the Cavite province on the island of Luzon.<sup>[4]</sup> Chavacano is the only Spanish-based creole in Asia.<sup>[5]</sup>

The different varieties of Chavacano differ in certain aspects like vocabulary but they are generally mutually intelligible by speakers of these varieties, especially between neighboring varieties. While a majority of the lexicon of the different Chavacano varieties derive from Spanish, their grammatical structures are generally similar to other Philippine languages. Among Philippine languages, it is the only one that is not an Austronesian language, but like Malayo-Polynesian languages, it uses reduplication.

The word Chabacano is derived from Spanish, roughly meaning "poor taste" or "vulgar", though the term itself carries no negative connotations to contemporary speakers and has lost its original Spanish meaning.

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Chavacano	
Chabacano	
Native to	Philippines
Region	Zamboanga City and Basilan (Zamboangueño), Cavite City (Caviteño) and Ternate, Cavite (Ternateño/Bahra)
Ethnicity	Zamboangueño people Spanish Filipino Filipinos in Indonesia Filipinos in Malaysia Filipino Americans
Native speakers	(689,000 cited 1992) <sup>[1][2]</sup>
Language family	Spanish-based creole <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chavacano</li> </ul>
Writing system	Latin (Spanish alphabet)
Official status	
Official language in	Regional language in the Philippines
Regulated by	Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	cbk
Glottolog	chav1241 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/language/6890">http://glottolog.org/resource/language/6890</a> ) <sup>[3]</sup>
Linguasphere	51-AAC-ba



Areas where Chavacano is spoken

## Distribution and variants

### Varieties

Linguists have identified at least six Spanish Creole varieties in the Philippines. Their classification is based on their substrate languages and the regions where they are commonly spoken. The three known varieties of Chavacano with Tagalog as their substrate language are the Luzon-based creoles of which are **Caviteño** (spoken in Cavite City), **Bahra** or **Ternateño** (spoken in Ternate, Cavite) and **Ermiteño** (once spoken in the old district of Ermita in Manila and is now extinct).



Native Zamboangueño speakers in Mindanao

Variety	Places	Native speakers
<b>Zamboangueño (Zamboangueño/Zamboangueño Chavacano/Chabacano de Zamboanga)</b>	<u>Zamboanga City</u> , <u>Basilan</u> , <u>Sulu</u> , <u>Tawi-Tawi</u> , <u>Zamboanga del Sur</u> , <u>Zamboanga del Norte</u> , <u>Zamboanga Sibugay</u> ,	359,000 (Rubino 2008, citing 2000 census) <sup>[6]</sup>
<b>Caviteño (Chabacano di Nisos/Chabacano de Cavite)</b>	<u>Cavite</u>	4,000 (2013) <sup>[6]</sup>
<b>Cotabateño (Chabacano de Cotabato)</b>	<u>Cotabato City</u> , <u>Maguindanao</u>	Extinct
<b>Castellano Abakay (Chabacano Davaoeño)</b>	<u>Davao Region</u> , <u>Davao City</u>	Extinct
<b>Ternateño (Bahra)</b>	<u>Ternate</u>	3,000 (2013) <sup>[6]</sup>
<b>Ermiteño (Ermitense)</b>	<u>Ermita</u>	Extinct

There are a number of theories on how these different varieties of Chavacano have evolved and how they are related to one another. According to some linguists, Zamboangueño Chavacano is believed to have been influenced by Caviteño Chabacano as evidenced by prominent Zamboangueño families who descended from Spanish Army officers (from Spain and Latin America), primarily Caviteño mestizos, stationed at Fort Pilar in the 19th century. When Caviteño officers recruited workers and technicians from Iloilo to man their sugar plantations and rice fields to reduce the local population's dependence on the Donativo de Zamboanga, the Spanish colonial government levied taxes on the islanders to support the fort's operations. With the subsequent migration of Ilonggo traders to Zamboanga, the Zamboangueño Chavacano was infused with Hiligaynon words as the previous migrant community was assimilated.<sup>[7]</sup>

Most of what appears to be Cebuano words in Zamboangueño Chavacano are actually Hiligaynon. Although Zamboangueño Chavacano's contact with Cebuano began much earlier when Cebuano soldiers were stationed at Fort Pilar during the Spanish colonial period, it was not until closer to the middle of the 20th century that borrowings from Cebuano accelerated from more migration from the Visayas as well as the current migration from other Visayan-speaking areas of the Zamboanga Peninsula.

**Zamboangueño** (Chavacano) is spoken in Zamboanga City, Basilan, parts of Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, and Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay and Zamboanga del Norte. Zamboangueño Chavacano is the most dynamically spoken language of Philippine Creole Spanish. It is used as a lingua franca between both Muslim and Christians in the Southwestern Mindanao and Basilan Islands communities. Its influence has spread to other islands in the west, such as the Jolo Islands, as well as to Cotabato and Davao in Mindanao, and finally down south to Malaysia.<sup>[8]</sup> The other varieties of Chavacano with Cebuano as their primary substrate language are the Mindanao-based creoles of which are **Castellano Abakay** or **Chavacano Davaoeño** (now extinct but was spoken in some areas of Davao), influenced by Chinese and Japanese, and divided into two varieties, Castellano Abakay Chino and Castellano Abakay Japón, and **Cotabateño** (no longer spoken in Cotabato City). Both Cotabateño and Davaoeño are very similar to Zamboangueño.

### Characteristics

The Chavacano languages in the Philippines are creoles based on Mexican Spanish and possibly, Portuguese. In some Chavacano languages, most words are common with Andalusian Spanish, but there are many words borrowed from Nahuatl, a language native to Central Mexico, which aren't found in Andalusian Spanish. Although the vocabulary is largely Mexican, its grammar is mostly based on other Philippine languages, primarily Ilonggo, Tagalog and Cebuano. By way of Spanish, its vocabulary also has influences from the Native American languages Nahuatl, Taino, Quechua, etc. as can be evidenced by the words chongo (monkey, instead of Spanish 'mono'), tiange (mini markets), etc.

In contrast with the Luzon-based dialects, the Zamboangueño variety has the most borrowings and/or influence from other Philippine Austronesian languages including Hiligaynon and Tagalog. Words of Malay origin are present in the Zamboangueño variety; the latter is included because although not local in Philippines, it was the lingua franca of maritime Southeast Asia. As the Zamboangueño variety is also spoken by Muslims, the variety has some Arabic loanwords, most commonly Islamic terms. In spite of this, it's difficult to trace whether these words have their origin in the local population or in Spanish itself, given that Spanish has about 6,000 words of Arabic origin. Chavacano also contains loanwords of Persian origin which enter Chavacano via Malay and Arabic; both Persian and Spanish are Indo-European languages.

### Demographics

The highest number of Chavacano speakers are found in Zamboanga City and in the island province of Basilan. A significant number of Chavacano speakers are found in Cavite City and Ternate. There are also speakers in some areas in the provinces of Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Norte, Davao, and in Cotabato City. According to the official 2000 Philippine census, there were altogether 607,200 Chavacano speakers in the Philippines in that same year. The exact figure could be higher as the 2000 population of Zamboanga City, whose main language is Chavacano, far exceeded that census figure. Also, the figure doesn't include Chavacano speakers of the Filipino diaspora. All the same, Zamboangueño is the variety with the most number of speakers, being the official language of Zamboanga City whose population is now believed to be over a million; is also an official language in Basilan.

Chavacano speakers are also found in Semporna and elsewhere in Sabah as Sabah was under partial Spanish sovereignty and via Filipino refugees who escaped from Zamboanga Peninsula and predominantly Muslim areas of Mindanao like Sulu Archipelago.<sup>[9]</sup>

A small number of Zamboanga's indigenous peoples and of Basilan, such as the Tausugs, the Samals, and the Yakans, majority of those people are Sunni Muslims, also speak the language. In the close provinces of Sulu and Tawi-Tawi areas, there are Muslim speakers of the Chavacano de Zamboanga, all of them are neighbors of Christians. Speakers of the Chavacano de Zamboanga, both Christians and Muslims, also live in Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur. Christians and Muslims in Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Cotabato, South Cotabato, Cotabato City, and Saranggani speak Chavacano de Zamboanga. Take note that Zamboanga Peninsula, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-tawi, Maguindanao, Cotabato City, Soccsksargen (region that composed of Sultan Kudarat, Cotabato, South Cotabato, and Saranggani) and Davao Region became part of short-lived Republic of Zamboanga, which chose Chavacano as official language.

## Social significance

Chavacano has been primarily and practically a spoken language. In the past, its use in literature was limited and chiefly local to the geographical location where the particular variety of the language was spoken. Its use as a spoken language far exceeds its use in literary work in comparison to the use of Spanish in the Philippines which was more successful as a written language than a spoken language. In recent years, there have been efforts to encourage the use of Chavacano as a written language, but the attempts were mostly minor attempts in folklore and religious literature and few pieces of written materials by the print media. In Zamboanga City, while the language is used by the mass media, the Catholic Church, education, and the local government, there have been few literary work written in Zamboangueño and access to these resources by the general public isn't readily available; Bibles of Protestant Christians are also written in standard Chavacano. As Chavacano is spoken by Muslims as second language not only in Zamboanga City and Basilan but even in Sulu and Tawi-tawi, a number of Qur'an books are published in Chavacano.

The Zamboangueño variety has been constantly evolving especially during half of the past century until the present. Zamboangueño has been experiencing an infusion of English and more Tagalog words and from other languages worldwide in its vocabulary and there have been debates and discussions among older Chavacano speakers, new generation of Chavacano speakers, scholars, linguists, sociologists, historians, and educators regarding its preservation, cultivation, standardization, and its future as a Spanish-based creole. In 2000, The Instituto Cervantes in Manila hosted a conference entitled "Shedding Light on the Chavacano Language" at the Ateneo de Manila University. Starting school year 2012–13, the Zamboangueño variant has also been taught at schools following the implementation of the Department of Education's policy of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). It serves as a medium of instruction from kindergarten to grade 3 and as a separate subject (Mother Tongue) from grades 1 to 3.

Because of the grammatical structures, Castilian usage, and archaic Spanish words and phrases that Chavacano (especially Zamboangueño) uses, between speakers of both contemporary Spanish and Chavacano who are uninitiated, both languages appear to be non-intelligible to a large extent. For the initiated speakers, Chavacano can be intelligible to some Spanish speakers, and while most Spanish words can easily be understood by Chavacano speakers, many would struggle to understand a complete Spanish sentence.

## Terminology

The term **Chavacano** or **Chabacano** originated from the Spanish word chabacano which literally means "poor taste", "vulgar", "common", "of low quality", or "coarse". Chavacano has since evolved into a word of its own in different spellings with no negative connotation, but to simply being the name of the language itself.

During the Spanish colonial period, what is today called *Chavacano* was also called by the Spanish-speaking population as the "*lenguaje de la calle*", "*lenguaje de parian*" (language of the street), or "*lenguaje de cocina*" (kitchen Spanish) to refer to the Chabacano spoken by the people of Manila, particularly in Ermita) to distinguish it from the Spanish language spoken by those of the upper class, which consisted of Spaniards and educated Natives.

Linguists use the term **Philippine Creole Spanish** which can be further divided into two geographic classifications: Manila Bay Creoles (which includes Ternateño and Caviteño) and Mindanao Creole (including Zamboangueño). The varieties of the language are geographically related. The Manila Bay Creoles have Tagalog as their substrate language while The Mindanao Creoles have Visayan (mostly Cebuano, Tausug, and Hiligaynon), Subanon, and Sama as their substrate language(s).

Chavacano/Chabacano speakers themselves have different preferences on whether to spell the language with a V or a B.<sup>[10]</sup> They emphasise the difference between their variety and others using their own geographical location as a point of reference. Language speakers in Ternate also use the term Bahra to refer to their language and their city. Chavacano varieties usually have their area name attached to the language.

In Zamboanga City, most people are using the V in spelling the language as Chavacano. In the three-day Chavacano Orthography Congress held on Nov 19-21, 2014, wherein it included the presentation by researchers on Chavacano, mostly results from surveys conducted among selected respondents in the city, the newly organized Chavacano Orthography Council met with the officials of the Department of Education and agreed among others that the language is to be spelled with the V. Most people in support of this move would like to distance their language Chavacano to the word Chabacano which also means 'vulgar' in Spanish.

Chavacano/Chabacano varieties and alternative names

Location	Geographical area	Alternative names and spellings
Zamboanga	Mindanao	Chavacano, Zamboangueño, Zamboangueño Chavacano
Cavite	Manila Bay	Chabacano de Cavite, Caviteño, Chabacano Caviteño, Lingua de Niso
Basilan	Mindanao	Zamboangueño, Chavacano de Zamboanga
Cotabato	Mindanao	Cotabateño, Chavacano Cotabateño
Davao	Mindanao	Davaoeño, Chavacano Davaoeño, Castellano Abakay, Davao Chavacano
Ermita	Manila Bay	Ermitense, Ermita Chabacano
Ternate	Manila Bay	Ternateño, Ternateño Chabacano, Bahra, Lingua de Bahra

## Historical background

There is no definite conclusion on the precise history of how these different varieties of Chavacano developed.

Prior to the formation of what is today the Philippines, what existed were a collection of various islands and different ethnolinguistic groups inhabiting them. The Spanish colonisation of the Philippine islands had led to the presence of the Spanish language in the islands. Though Spanish was the language of the government, the various languages originating and found in the islands remained the mother tongue of the various inhabitants. Instead of using Spanish to spread Christianity, Spanish missionaries preferred to learn the various local languages. With over 300 years of Spanish colonial rule, the Spanish language came to influence the various Philippine languages to varying degrees by way of aspects like new loanwords and expressions.

Creole languages (such as French-based creoles) have formed at various points in time around the world due to colonialism. As a result of contact between speakers of two mutually non-intelligible languages, creole languages have evolved in some cases to facilitate communication. This usually involves taking the vocabulary of another language and grammatical features of the native language. In contrast to the numerous French-based creole languages, only three creole languages have been found to be Spanish-based or heavily influenced: Papiamento, Palenquero, and Chavacano. In the Philippines, a major difficulty in tracing the development of Chavacano is the confusion attributed to in accounts of travelers to the Philippines between a coherent creole language, 'broken Spanish', and fluent Spanish.<sup>[11]</sup> The earliest believed attestation of a coherent creole language spoken in Cavite City comes from the Augustinian priest Martínez de Zúñiga who in his 1803 accounts of his travels in the Philippines, *Estadismos de las Islas Filipinas*, notes that "In Cavite and in its suburb of San Roque, a very corrupted Spanish is spoken, whose phraseology is entirely taken from the language of the country".<sup>[7]</sup> Mentions of a vernacular referred to as "kitchen Spanish" and "language of the market" (referring to the Manila variety), or other terms are found in a number of texts of the 19th century. However, the kind of vernacular referred to by these terms are imprecise and these terms may refer to a fully fledged creole or to a Spanish-pidgin spoken by Chinese and Filipino merchants.

The manner of formation of this type of speech found in a number of communities around the Philippines remains unclear today. A sample of what is today called Chabacano may be found in dialogues contained in chapters 18 (*Supercherías*) and 28 (*Tatakut*) of Filipino writer José Rizal's 1891 work *El Filibusterismo*.<sup>[12][13]</sup> The dialogue found in chapter 18 is:

—¿Porque ba no di podí nisós entrá? preguntaba una voz de mujer.

—Abá, ñora, porque 'tallá el maná priales y el maná empleau, contestó un hombre; 'ta jasí solo para ilós el cabesa de espinge.

—¡Curioso también el maná priales! dijo la voz de mujer alejándose; ¡no quiere pa que di sabé nisos cuando ilos ta sali ingañau! ¡Cosa! ¡Querida be de priale el cabesa!

In the 1883 work of German linguist Hugo Schuchardt *Über das Malaiospanische der Philippinen*, he presents fragments of texts and comments of what he calls "Malayo-Spanish". However, the first to give a general study and investigation of the varieties of Chavacano as a group was by Keith Whinnom in his 1956 work *The Spanish Contact Vernaculars in the Philippine Islands*. Whinnom gives an overall view of the history and grammar of what he calls "Ermitaño" of Ermita in Manila, "Caviteño" of Cavite and "Zamboangueño" of Zamboanga. In it, he also postulated his monogenetic theory on the origin of these vernaculars.

Linguists are unsettled on how these vernaculars formed and how they connect to one another, if any. There are many theories but the two main theories of the origin of Chavacano are: Whinnom's "monogenetic theory" and a "parallel-development" theory proposed by Frake in 1971.

## Monogenetic theory

According to the Monogenetic theory or one-way theory advanced by Whinnom, all varieties of Chavacano result from a single source and that varieties are related to each other.

## Parallel-development theory

The parallel development theory or two-way theory as advocated by Frake in 1971, the variants found in Luzon and Mindanao had evolved autonomously from each other.

## Zamboangueño

On 23 June 1635, Zamboanga City became a permanent foothold of the Spanish government with the construction of the San José Fortress. Bombardment and harassment from pirates and raiders of the sultans of Mindanao and Jolo and the determination to spread Christianity further south (as Zamboanga was a crucial strategic location) of the Philippines forced the Spanish missionary friars to request reinforcements from the colonial government.

The military authorities decided to import labour from Luzon and the Visayas. Thus, the construction workforce eventually consisted of Spanish, Mexican and Peruvian soldiers, masons from Cavite (who comprised the majority), sacadas from Cebu and Iloilo, and those from the various local tribes of Zamboanga like the Samals and Subanons.

Language differences made it difficult for one ethnic group to communicate with another. To add to this, work instructions were issued in Spanish. The majority of the workers were unschooled and therefore did not understand Spanish but needed to communicate with each other and the Spaniards. A pidgin developed and became a full-fledged creole language still in use today as a lingua franca and/or as official language, mainly in Zamboanga City.

When the Sultanate of Sulu gave up its territories in Sulu Archipelago to Spain within late 1700s (Sulu Sultanate gave up Basilan to Spain in 1762, while Sulu and Tawi-tawi were not given up by sultanate because the Sulu Sultanate only recognised partial Spanish sovereignty to Sulu and Tawi-tawi), Spanish settlers and soldiers brought the language to the region until Spain, Germany, and United Kingdom signed an agreement named the Madrid Protocol of 1885 that recognised Spanish rule of Sulu Archipelago. Chavacano becomes a lingua franca of Sulu Archipelago (composing of Sulu, Tawi-tawi, Basilan); although North Borneo (now Sabah) is not included on the Spanish East Indies area as stated on the Protocol and control by the United Kingdom, Chavacano has still a little impact in Semporna.

From then on, constant Spanish military reinforcements as well as increased presence of Spanish religious and educational institutions have fostered the Spanish creole.

## Caviteño / Ternateño

The Merdicas (also spelled Mardicas or Mardikas) were Catholic natives of the islands of Ternate and Tidore of the Moluccas in the vicinity of New Guinea, converted during the Portuguese occupation of the islands by Jesuit missionaries. The islands were later captured by the Spanish who vied for their control with the Dutch. In 1663, the Spanish garrison in Ternate were forced to pull out to defend Manila against an impending invasion by the Chinese pirate Koxinga.

(sacrificing the Moluccas to the Dutch in doing so). A number of Merdicas volunteered to help, eventually being resettled in a sandbar near the mouth of the Maragondon river (known as the *Barra de Maragondon*) and Tanza, Cavite, Manila.<sup>[14]</sup>

The invasion did not occur as Koxinga fell ill and died. The Merdicas community eventually integrated into the local population. Today, the place is called Ternate after the island of Ternate in the Moluccas, and the descendants of the Merdicas continue to use their Spanish creole (with Portuguese influence) which came to be known as Caviteño or Ternateño Chavacano.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Samples

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### Zamboangueño

#### Donde tu hay anda?

Spanish: ¿A dónde vas?  
(‘Where are you going?’)

#### Ya mirá yo con José.

Spanish: Yo vi a José.  
(‘I saw José.’)

#### Ya empezá ele buscá que buscá entero lugar con el sal.

Spanish: El/Ella empezó a buscar la sal en todas partes.  
(‘He/She began to search everywhere for the salt.’)

#### Ya andá ele na escuela.

Spanish: El/Ella se fue a la escuela.  
(‘He/She went to school.’)

#### Si Mario ya dormí na casa.

Spanish: Mario durmió en la casa.  
(‘Mario slept in the house.’)

#### El hombre, con quien ya man encuentro tu, es mi hermano.

Spanish: El hombre que encontraste, es mi hermano.  
(‘The man [whom] you met is my brother.’)

#### El persona con quien tu tan cuento, bien alegre gayot.

Spanish: La persona con la que estás hablando es muy alegre. / La persona con quien tú estás conversando es bien alegre.  
(‘The person you are talking to is very happy indeed.’)

### Another sample of Zamboangueño Chavacano

Zamboangueño Chavacano	Spanish	English
Treinta y cuatro kilometro desde el pueblo de Zamboanga el Bunguiao, un diutay barrio que estaba un desierto. No hay gente quien ta queda aquí antes. Abundante este lugar de maga animales particularmente maga puerco 'e monte, gatorgalla, venao y otro más pa. Solamente maga pajariadores lang ta visitá con este lugar.	El Bunguiao, a treinta y cuatro kilómetros desde el pueblo de Zamboanga, es un pequeño barrio que una vez fue un área salvaje. No había gente que se quedara a vivir ahí. En este lugar había en abundancia animales salvajes tales como cerdos, gatos monteses, venados, y otros más. Este lugar era visitado únicamente por cazadores de pájaros.	Bunguiao, a small village, thirty four kilometers from the city of Zamboanga, was once a wilderness. No people lived here. The place abounded with wild animals such as pigs, wildcats, deer, and still others. The place was visited only by bird hunters.

### Ermiteño

En la dulzura de mi afán,  
Junto contigo na un peñón  
Mientras ta despierta  
El buan y en  
Las playas del Pasay  
Se iba bajando el sol.

Yo te decía, "gusto ko"  
Tu me decías, "justo na"  
Y de repente  
¡Ay nakú!  
Ya sentí yo como si  
Un asuáng ta cercá.

Que un cangrejo ya corré,  
Poco a poco na tu lao.  
Y de pronto ta escondé  
Bajo tus faldas, ¡amoratáo!

Cosa que el diablo hacé,  
Si escabeche o kalamáy,  
Ese el que no ta sabé  
Hasta que yo ya escuché  
Fuerte-fuerte el voz: ¡Aray!

The following is sample of Ermitaño taken from the April 1917 publication of *The Philippine Review*, the poem was written by the Filipino Spanish-language writer Jesús Balmori (who also wrote other texts in Ermitaño)<sup>[15]</sup> and is entitled "Na Maldito Arena";<sup>[16]</sup>

Ta sumí el sol na fondo del mar, y el mar, callao el boca. Ta jugá con su mana marejadas com'un muchacha nerviosa con su mana pulseras. El viento no mas el que ta alborota, el viento y el pecho de Felisa que ta lleno de sampaguitas na fuera y lleno de suspiros na dentro...<sup>[16]</sup>

According to Keith Whinnom's "Spanish contact vernaculars in the Philippine Islands" (1956), there were reportedly still an estimated 12,000 speakers in 1942 of Ermitaño. After World War II, much of Manila was destroyed and its citizens displaced. This variety is considered to be virtually extinct.

## Caviteño / Ternateño

### Nisós ya pidí pabor cun su papáng.

Spanish: Nosotros ya pedimos un favor de tu padre.  
(We have already asked your father for a favor.)

Ternateño follows pronominal system of three different pronouns, including subjects, objects and possession. The system follows the same pattern as Spanish, including both singular and plural conjugations based on what the speaker is explaining. For example *yo* (Spanish singular) becomes *bo* (Ternateño), whereas *nosotros* (Spanish plural) becomes *mihótro* (Ternateño). Additionally Ternateño incorporates alternate language forms for different participles to denote the relationship with the individual being the speaker as well as the listener. This includes polite as well as casual foundation of speech, for example *yo* (casual) versus *(éle)*.<sup>[17]</sup>

### Another sample of Chavacano de Cavite

#### Chavacano de Cavite:

#### Spanish:

#### English:

Puede nisós hablá: que grande nga palá el Nosotros podemos decir qué grandes sacrificios We can say what great sacrifices our sacrificio del mga héroes para niso ofrecieron nuestros héroes para obtener nuestra heroes have done to achieve our independencia. Debe nga palá no niso ulvida independencia. Entonces, no nos olvidemos de independence. We should therefore not con ilos. Ansina ya ba numa? Debe hací niso ellos. ¿Como lo logramos? Necesitamos hacer forget them. How do we do that? We mga cosa para dale sabí que ta aprecia niso cosas para que sepan que apreciamos a nuestros should do things to let it be known that we con el mga héroes. Que preparáo din niso hací héroes; que estamos preparados tambien a appreciate the heroes; that we are sacrificio para el pueblo. ¿Qué laya? ¿Escribí sacrificar por la nación. ¿Cómo lo haremos? ¿Hay prepared to make sacrifices for our people. mga novela como José Rizal? que escribir también novelas como José Rizal? How? Should we write novels like José Rizal?

## Castellano Abakay (Chavacano Davaoeño)

Below are samples of dialogues and sentences of Davaoeño in two spoken forms: Castellano Abakay Chino (Chinese style) by the Chinese speakers of Chabacano and Castellano Abakay Japon (Japanese style) by the Japanese speakers. Chavacano Davaoeño became an extinct dialect of the Chavacano language as of the 2000s.

### Castellano Abakay Chino

- Note: only selected phrases are given with Spanish translations, some are interpretations and rough English translations are also given.

### La Ayuda

**Ayudante:** Señor, yo vino aquí para pedir vos ayuda.  
(Spanish: Señor, he venido aquí para pedir su ayuda.)  
(English: Sir, I have come here to ask for your help.)

**Patron:** Yo quiere prestá contigo diez pesos. Ese ba hija tiene mucho calentura. Necesita llevá doctor.  
(Spanish: Quiero pedirle diez pesos prestados. Mi hija tiene calentura. Necesita un médico.)  
(English: I want borrow ten pesos from you. My daughter has a fever. She needs a doctor.)

### Valentina y Conching (Conchita)

**Valentina:** ¿iConching, dónde vos (tu) papá?! ¿No hay pa llegá?  
Spanish: ¿iConching, dónde está tu papá?! ¿No ha llegado todavía?  
English: Conching, where is your dad? Hasn't he arrived yet?  
**Conching:** Llegá noche ya. ¿Cosa quiere ayo (yo) habla cuando llegá papa?  
Spanish: Llegará esta noche. ¿Qué quiere que le diga cuando llegue?  
English: He will arrive this evening. What do you want me to tell him when he comes?

**Ako (yo) hablá ese esposa mio, paciencia plimelo (primero). Cuando male negocio, comé nugaw (lugaw – puré de arroz). Pero, cuando bueno negocio, katáy (carnear) manok (pollo).**

Spanish: Me limitaré a decir a mi esposa, mis disculpas. Cuando nuestro negocio va mal, comemos gachas. Pero si funciona bien, carneamos y servimos pollo.  
English: I will just tell my wife, my apologies. We eat porridge when our business goes very badly. But if it goes well, then we will butcher and serve chicken.

**¡Corre pronto! ¡Caé aguacero! Yo hablá contigo cuando salé casa lleva payóng (paraguas). No quiere ahora mucho mojao.**

Spanish: ¡Corre rápido! ¡La lluvia está cayendo! Ya te dije que cuando salgas de tu casa, debes llevar un paraguas. No quiero que te mojes.  
English: Run quickly! It's raining! I already told you to take an umbrella when you leave the house. I don't want you to get wet.

**¿Ese ba Tinong (Florentino) no hay vergüenza? Anda visita casa ese novia, comé ya allí. Ese papa de iya novia, regaño mucho. Ese Tinong, no hay colocación. ¿Cosa dale comé esposa después?**

Spanish: ¿Que Florentino no tiene vergüenza? Fue a visitar a su novia, y comió allí. El padre de su novia lo regaña mucho. Florentino no tiene trabajo. ¿Qué le proveerá a su esposa después?  
English: Doesn't Florentino have any shame? He went to visit his girlfriend and ate dinner there. Her father scolds him a lot. That Florentino has no job. What will he provide for his wife then?

### Castellano Abakay Japon

Estimated English translations provided with Japanese words.

**¿Por qué usted no andá paseo? Kará tiene coche, viaje usted. ¿Cosa hace dinero? Trabaja mucho, no gozá.**

Why don't you go for a walk? You travel by your car. What makes money? You work a lot, you don't enjoy yourself.

- Karâ (から) – *por* (Spanish); *from or by* (English)

**Usted mirá porque yo no regañá ese hijo mío grande. Día-día sale casa, ese ba igual andá oficina; pero día-día pide dinero.**

Look because I don't tell off that big son of mine. Every day he leaves the house, the same for walking to the office; but every day he asks for money.

**Señora, yo dale este pescado usted. No grande, pero mucho bueno. Ese kirey y muy bonito. (Op.cit.)**

Madame, I give this fish to you. It's not big, but it's very good. It is bonny and very nice.

- Kirei (綺麗) – *hermosa, "bonita"* (Spanish); *beautiful, bonny* (English)

## Pledge of Allegiance to the Philippine Flag

### Zamboangueño

Yo (soy) un Filipino.  
Yo ta prometé mi lealtad  
na bandera de Filipinas  
y el País que ese ta representá  
Con Honor, Justicia y Libertad  
que ya pone na movimiento el un nación  
para Dios,  
para'l pueblo,  
para naturaleza,  
y para Patria.

### English

I am a Filipino  
I pledge my allegiance  
To the flag of the Philippines  
And to the country it represents  
With honor, justice and freedom  
Put in motion by one Nation  
For God  
for the People,  
for Nature and  
for the Country.

## Vocabulary

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### Forms and style

Chavacano (especially Zamboangueño) has two registers or sociolects: The common, colloquial, vulgar or familiar and the formal register/sociolects. Broadly speaking, the formal register is closer to Spanish, and the colloquial register to the local Austronesian languages.

In the common, colloquial, vulgar or familiar register/sociolect, words of local origin or a mixture of local and Spanish words predominate. The common or familiar register is used ordinarily when conversing with people of equal or lower status in society. It is also used more commonly in the family, with friends and acquaintances. Its use is of general acceptance and usage.

In the formal register/sociolect, words of Spanish origin or Spanish words predominate. The formal register is used especially when conversing with people of higher status in society. It is also used when conversing with elders (especially in the family and with older relatives) and those in authority. It is more commonly used by older generations, by Zamboangueño mestizos, and in the barrios. It is the form used in speeches, education, media, and writing. The formal register used in conversation is sometimes mixed with some degree of colloquial register.

The following examples show a contrast between the usage of formal words and common or familiar words in Chavacano:

English	Chavacano (formal)	Chavacano (common/colloquial/vulgar/familiar)	Spanish
slippery	resbalozo/resbaladizo	malandug	resbaloso/resbaladizo
rice	morisqueta	kanon/arroz	morisqueta (understood as a Filipino rice dish)/arroz
rain	lluvia/aguacero	aguacero/ulan	lluvia/aguacero
dish	vianda/comida	comida/ulam	vianda/comida
braggart/boastful	orgulloso(a)	bugalon(a)/hambuguero(a)	orgulloso(a)
car	coche	auto	auto/coche
housemaid	muchacho (m)/muchacha (f)	ayudanta (female); ayudante (male)	muchacha(o)/ayudante
father	papá (tata)	pápang (tata)	papá (padre)
mother	mamá (nana)	mámang (nana)	mamá (madre)
grandfather	abuelo	abuelo/lolo	abuelo/lolo
grandmother	abuela	abuela/lola	abuela/lela
small	chico(a)/pequeño(a)	pequeño(a)/diutay	pequeño/chico
nuisance	fastidio	asarante / salawayun	fastidio
hard-headed	testarudo	duro cabeza/duro pulso	testarudo/cabeza dura
slippers	chancla	chinelas	chancla/chinelas
married	de estado/de estao	casado/casao	casado
(my) parents	(mis) padres	(mi) tata'y nana	(mis) padres
naughty	travieso(a)	guachi / guachinanggo(a)	travieso(a)
slide	rezbalasa/deslizar	landug	resbalar/deslizar
ugly	feo (masculine)/fea (feminine)	malacara, malacuka	feo(a)
rainshower	lluve	talítih	lluvia
lightning	rayo	rayo/quirlat	rayo
thunder/thunderstorm	trueno	trueno	trueno
tornado	tornado/remolino, remulleno	ipo-ipo	tornado/remolino
thin (person)	delgado(a)/flaco(a)/chiquito(a)	flaco/flaquit	delgado/flaco/flaquito

## Writing system

Chavacano is written using the [Latin script](#). As Chavacano has mostly been a [spoken language](#) than a written one, multiple ways of writing the different varieties of Chavacano exist. Most published Chavacano texts utilize spelling systems nearly identical to Spanish, adjusting certain spellings of words to reflect how they are pronounced by native Chavacano speakers. Since the propagation of the usage of the [Filipino language](#) in education and the media as the national language, Filipino's orthography has affected how certain persons might spell Chavacano, especially since recent generations have grown unfamiliar with Spanish orthography; Most published works, and the general media, however more often retain Spanish-based spelling systems.

The kind of writing system used to write Chavacano may differ according to the writer of the text. Writing may be written using a Spanish-derived writing system, where all words (including words of local origin) are spelled adhering to basic Spanish orthographic rules; it may also be written "phonetically", similar to the modern orthography of Filipino; another writing style uses a mixture of the two, spelling words based on an etymological approach, using phonetic spelling for words of Filipino origin and Spanish spelling rules for words of Spanish origin.

in Zamboanga, an etymological-based approach was formally recently endorsed by the local city government and this is the system used in public schools as part of the mother-tongue policy of the Department of Education for kindergarten to grade 3. In principle, words of Spanish origin are to be spelled using Spanish rules while Chavacano words of local origin are spelled in the manner according to their origin. Thus, the letter *k* appear mostly in words of [Austronesian](#) origin or in loanwords from other Philippine languages (words such as *kame*, *kita*, *kanamon*, *kaninyo*).

It is uncommon in modern written works to include the [acute accent](#) and the [trema](#) in writing except in linguistic or highly formalized texts. Also, the letters *ñ* and *ll* are sometimes replaced by *ny* and *ly* in informal texts.

## Alphabet

The Chavacano alphabet has 30 letters, including *ch*, *ll*, *ñ* and *rr*.<sup>[18]</sup>

**a, b, c, ch, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, ll, m, n, ñ, o, p, q, r, rr, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z**

## Letters and letter names

A a	a /a/	J j	jota /'xota/	R r	ere /'ere/
B b	be /be/	K k	ka /ka/	Rr rr	erre /'ere/
C c	ce /se/	L l	ele /'ele/	S s	ese /'ese/
Ch ch	che /tʃe/	Ll ll	elle /'eñe/	T t	te /te/
D d	de /de/	M m	eme /'eme/	U u	u /u/
E e	e /e/	N n	ene /ene/	V v	uve /'ube/
F f	efe /'efe/	Ñ ñ	eñe /'eñe/	W w	doble u /'uve doble/
G g	ge /xe/	O o	o /o/	X x	equis /'ekis/
H h	hache /'atʃe/	P p	pe /pe/	Y y	ye /ʃje/
I i	i /i/	Q q	cu /ku/	Z z	zeta /'seta/ zeda /'sedə/

Other letter combinations include *rr* (erre), which is pronounced /xr/ or /r/, and *ng*, which is pronounced /ŋg/. Another combination was *ñg*, which was pronounced /ŋ/ but is now obsolete and is only written as *ng*.

Some sounds are not represented in the Chavacano written language. These sounds are mostly in words of Philippine and foreign origin. Furthermore, the pronunciation of some words of Spanish origin have become distorted or Philippinized in modern Chavacano. Some vowels have become allophonized ('e' and 'o' becomes 'i' and 'u' in some words) and some consonants have changed their pronunciation. (i.e. *escoger* became *iscuít* in informal speech; *tiene* /tʃεnε/; *Dios* /dʒɔs/; *Castilla* became /kastilla/ instead of /kastiʎa/).

Glottal stops, as in Filipino languages, are not also indicated (â, ê, î, ô, û). These sounds are mainly found in words of Philippine origin and are only indicated in dictionaries (i.e. *jendê* = not; *olê* = again) and when they are, the circumflex accent is used.

Other pronunciation changes in some words of Spanish origin include:

f ~ /p/  
j, g (before 'e' and 'i') ~ /h/ (in common with dialects of Caribbean and other areas of Latin America and southern Spain)  
ch ~ /ts/  
rr ~ /xr/  
di, de ~ /dʒ/ (when followed or preceded by other vowels: *Dios* ~ /jos/ ; *dejalo* ~ /jalo/)  
ti, te ~ /tʃ/ (when followed or preceded by other vowels: *tierra* ~ /chehra/; *tiene* ~ /chene/)  
ci, si ~ /ʃ/ (when followed or preceded by other vowels: *conciencia* ~ /konʃenʃa/)

[b, d, g] between vowels which are fricative allophones are pronounced as they are in Chavacano.

## Other sounds

-h /h/ (glottal fricative in the final position); sometimes not written  
-g /k/; sometimes written as just -k  
-d /t/; sometimes written as just -t  
-kh [χ]; only in loanwords of Arabic origin, mostly Islamic terms

## Sounds from English

"v" pronounced as English "v" (like: vase) (vi)  
"z" pronounced as English "z" (like: zebra) (zi)  
"x" pronounced as English "x" (like: X-ray) (ex/eks)  
"h" like: house (/eɪtʃ/); sometimes written as 'j'

## Diphthongs

Letters	Pronunciation	Example	Significant
ae	aye	caé	fall, to fall
ai	ay	caido	fallen, fell
ao	aow	cuidao	take care, cared
ea	eya	patéa	kick, to kick
ei	ey	reí	laugh
eo	eyo	vídeo	video
ia	ya	advertencia	warning, notice
ie	ye	cien(to)	one hundred, hundred
io	yo	canción	song
iu	yu	saciút	to move the hips a little
uo	ow	institutuo	institute
qu	ke	qué, que	what, that, than
gu	strong g	guía	to guide, guide
ua	wa	agua	water
ue	we	cuento	story
ui	wi	cuidá	care, to take care
oi	oy	oí	hear, to hear

## Grammar

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### Simple sentence structure (verb–subject–object word order)

Chavacano is a language with the verb–subject–object sentence order. This is because it follows the Hiligaynon or Tagalog grammatical structures. However, the subject–verb–object order does exist in Chavacano but only for emphasis purposes (see below). New generations have been slowly and vigorously using the S-V-O pattern mainly because of the influence of the English language. These recent practices have been most prevalent and evident in the mass media particularly among Chavacano newswriters who translate news leads from English or Tagalog to Chavacano where the "who" is emphasized more than the "what". Because the mass media represent "legitimacy", it is understood by Chavacano speakers (particularly Zamboangueños) that the S-V-O sentence structure used by Chavacano journalists is standardized.

#### Declarative affirmative sentences in the simple present, past, and future tenses

Chavacano generally follows the simple verb–subject–object or verb–object–subject sentence structure typical of Hiligaynon or Tagalog in declarative affirmative sentences:

**Ta comprá** (verb) **el maga/maná negociente** (subject) **con el tierra** (object).  
**Ta comprá** (verb) **tierra** (object) **el maga/maná negociente** (subject).

Hiligaynon: Nagabakal (verb) ang mga manogbaligya (subject) sang duta (object).  
Hiligaynon: Nagabakal (verb) sang duta (object) ang mga manogbaligya (subject).  
Tagalog: Bumibili (verb) ang mga negosyante (subject) ng lupa (object).  
Tagalog: Bumibili (verb) ng lupa (object) ang mga negosyante (subject).

('The businessmen are buying land.')

The subject always appears after the verb, and in cases where pronominal subjects (such as personal pronouns) are used in sentences, they will never occur before the verb:

**Ya andá yo na iglesia enantes.**

('I went to church a while ago.')

#### Declarative negative sentences in the simple present, past, and future tenses

When the predicate of the sentence is negated, Chavacano uses the words **jendéh** (from Tagalog 'hindi' or Hiligaynon 'indi' which means 'no'; the Cebuano uses 'dili', which shows its remoteness from Chavacano as compared to Hiligaynon) to negate the verb in the present tense, **no hay** (which literally means 'none') to negate the verb that was supposed to happen in the past, and **jendéh** or **nunca** (which means 'no' or 'never') to negate the verb that will not or will never happen in the future respectively. This manner of negating the predicate always happens in the verb–subject–object or verb–object–subject sentence structure:

Present Tense

**Jendéh ta comprá** (verb) **el maga/maná negociente** (subject) **con el tierra** (object).  
**Jendéh ta comprá** (verb) **tierra** (object) **el maga/maná negociente** (subject).

(Eng: The businessmen are not buying land. Span: Los hombres de negocio no están comprando terreno)

Past Tense

**No hay comprá** (verb) **el maga/maná negociente** (subject) **con el tierra** (object).  
**No hay comprá** (verb) **tierra** (object) **el maga/maná negociente** (subject).

(Eng: The businessmen did not buy land. Span: Los hombres de negocio no compraron terreno)

## Future Tense

**Ay jendêh comprá** (verb) **el maga/mana negociante** (subject) **con el tierra** (object).  
**Ay jendêh comprá** (verb) **tierra** (object) **el maga/mana negociante** (subject).

(Eng: The businessmen will not buy land. Span: Los hombres de negocio no comprarán terreno)

**Nunca ay/Ay nunca comprá** (verb) **el maga/mana negociante** (subject) **con el tierra** (object).  
**Nunca ay/Ay nunca comprá** (verb) **tierra** (object) **el maga/mana negociante** (subject).

(Eng: The businessmen will never buy land. Span: Los hombres de negocio nunca comprarán terreno)

The negator **jendêh** can appear before the subject in a subject–verb–object structure to negate the subject rather than the predicate in the present, past, and future tenses:

## Present Tense

**Jendêh el maga/mana negociante** (subject) **ta comprá** (verb) **con el tierra** (object) **sino el maga/mana empleados**.

(Eng: It is not the businessmen who are buying land but the employees. Span: No es el hombre de negocio que están comprando terreno sino los empleados)

## Past Tense

**Jendêh el maga/mana negociante** (subject) **ya comprá** (verb) **con el tierra** (object) **sino el maga/mana empleados**.

(Eng: It was not the businessmen who bought the land but the employees. Span: No fue el hombre de negocio que compró el terreno sino los empleados)

## Future Tense

**Jendêh el maga/mana negociante** (subject) **ay comprá** (verb) **con el tierra** (object) **sino el maga/mana empleados**.  
**Ay jendêh comprá** (verb) **el maga/mana negociante(s)** (subject) **con el tierra** (object) **sino el maga/mana empleados**.

(Eng: It will not be the businessmen who will buy land but the employees. Span: No será el hombre de negocio que comprará el terreno sino los empleados)

The negator **nunca** can appear before the subject in a subject–verb–object structure to strongly negate (or denote impossibility) the subject rather than the predicate in the future tense:

## Future Tense

**Nunca el maga/mana negociante** (subject) **ay comprá** (verb) **con el tierra** (object) **sino el maga/mana empleados**.  
**Nunca ay comprá** (verb) **el maga/mana negociante** (subject) **con el tierra** (object) **sino el maga/mana empleados**.

(Eng: It will never be the businessmen who will buy land but the employees. Span: Nunca será el hombre de negocio que comprará el terreno sino los empleados)

The negator **no hay** and **nunca** can also appear before the subject to negate the predicate in a subject–verb–object structure in the past and future tenses respectively. Using **nunca** before the subject to negate the predicate in a subject–verb–object structure denotes strong negation or impossibility for the subject to perform the action in the future:

## Past Tense

**No hay el maga/mana negociante** (subject) **comprá** (verb) **con el tierra** (object).

(Eng: The businessmen did not buy land. Span: el hombre de negocio no compró terreno)

## Future Tense

**Nunca el maga/mana negociante** (subject) **ay comprá** (verb) **con el tierra** (object).

(Eng: The businessmen will never buy land. Span: el hombre de negocio nunca comprará terreno)

## Nouns and articles

The Chavacano definite article **el** precedes a singular noun or a plural marker (for a plural noun). The indefinite article **un** stays constant for gender as 'una' has almost completely disappeared in Chavacano, except for some phrases like "una vez". It also stays constant for number as for singular nouns. In Chavacano, it is quite common for **el** and **un** to appear together before a singular noun, the former to denote certainty and the latter to denote number:

**el cajón** ('the box') – **el maga/mana cajón(es)** ('the boxes')  
**un soltero** ('a bachelor') – **un soltera** ('a spinster')  
**el un soltero** ('the bachelor') – **el un soltera** ('the spinster')

Nouns in Chavacano are not always preceded by articles. Without an article, a noun is a generic reference:

**Jendeh yo ta llorá lagrimas sino sangre.**

('I do not cry tears but blood').

**Ta cargá yo palo.**

('I am carrying wood').

Proper names of persons are preceded by the definite article **si** or the phrase **un tal** functioning as an indefinite article would:

**Un bonita candidata si María..**

('Maria is a beautiful candidate'.)

**un tal Juancho**

('a certain Juancho')

**Singular nouns**

Unlike in Spanish, Chavacano nouns derived from Spanish do not follow gender rules in general. In Zamboangueño, the article 'el' basically precedes every singular noun. However, this rule is not rigid (especially in Zamboangueño) because the formal vocabulary mode wherein Spanish words predominate almost always is the preferred mode especially in writing. The Spanish article 'la' for feminine singular nouns does exist in Chavacano, though it occurs rarely and mostly in the formal medium of writing, such as poems and lyrics. When accompanying a Spanish feminine noun, the 'la' as the article is more tolerated than acceptable. Among the few exceptions where the 'la' occurs is as a formal prefix when addressing the Blessed Virgin Mary, perhaps more as an emphasis of her importance in Christian devotion. But the real article is still the 'el', which makes this use of a "double article" quite unique. Thus it is common to hear the Blessed Virgin addressed in Chavacano as 'el La Virgen María' (the "L" of the 'la' capitalized to signify its permanent position within the noun compound). In general, though, when in doubt, the article 'el' is always safe to use. Compare:

English singular noun	Chavacano singular noun (general and common)	Chavacano singular noun (accepted or uncommon)
the virgin	el virgen	la virgen (accepted)
the peace	el paz	la paz (accepted)
the sea	el mar	la mar (accepted)
the cat	el gato	el gato (la gata is uncommon)
the sun	el sol	el sol
the moon	el luna	el luna (la luna is uncommon)
the view	el vista	la vista (accepted)
the tragedy	el tragedia	el tragedia (la tragedia is uncommon)
the doctor	el doctor	el doctora (la doctora is uncommon)

And just like Spanish, Chavacano nouns can have gender but only when referring to persons. However, they are always masculine in the sense (Spanish context) that they are generally preceded by the article 'el'. Places and things are almost always masculine. The -o is dropped in masculine nouns and -a is added to make the noun feminine:

English singular noun	Chavacano singular noun (masculine)	Chavacano singular noun (feminine)
the teacher	el maestro	el maestra
the witch	el burujo	el buruja
the engineer	el engeniero	el engeniera
the tailor/seamstress	el sastrero	el sastrera
the baby	el niño	el niña
the priest/nun	el padre / sacerdote	el madre / monja
the grandson/granddaughter	el nieto	el nieta
the professor	el profesor	el profesora
the councilor	el consejal	el consejala

Not all nouns referring to persons can become feminine nouns. In Chavacano, some names of persons are masculine (because of the preceding article 'el' in Spanish context) but do not end in -o.

Examples: **el alcalde, el capitán, el negociante, el ayudante, el chufer**

All names of animals are always masculine—in Spanish context—preceded by the article 'el'.

Examples: **el gato** (gata is uncommon), **el puerco** (puerca is uncommon), **el perro** (perra is uncommon)

Names of places and things can be either masculine or feminine, but they are considered masculine in the Spanish context because the article 'el' always precedes the noun:

**el cocina, el pantalón, el comida, el camino, el trapo, el ventana, el mar**

**Plural nouns**

In Chavacano, plural nouns (whether masculine or feminine in Spanish context) are preceded by the retained singular masculine Spanish article 'el'. The Spanish articles 'los' and 'las' have almost disappeared. They have been replaced by the modifier (a plural marker) 'maga/maná' which precedes the singular form of the noun. Maga comes from the native Hiligaynon 'maga' or the Tagalog 'mga'. The formation of the Chavacano plural form of the noun (el + maga/maná + singular noun form) applies whether in common, familiar or formal mode. It may be thought of as roughly equivalent to saying in English, "the many (noun)" instead of "the (noun)s", and in fact "the many (noun)s" is used more in Philippine English than elsewhere.

There are some Chavacano speakers (especially older Caviteño or Zamboangueño speakers) who would tend to say 'maná' for 'maga'. 'Maná' is accepted and quite common, especially among older speakers, but when in doubt, the modifier 'maga' to pluralize nouns is safer to use.

English plural noun	Chavacano plural noun (masculine)	Chavacano plural noun (feminine)
the teachers	el maga/mana maestro(s)	el maga/mana maestra(s)
the witches	el maga/mana burujo(s)	el maga/mana buruja(s)
the engineers	el maga/mana engeniero(s)	el maga/mana engeniera(s)
the tailors/seamstresses	el maga/mana sastrero(s)	el maga/mana sastrera(s)
the babies	el maga/mana niño(s)	el maga/mana niña(s)
the priests/nuns	el maga/mana padre(s)	el maga/mana madre(s)
the grandsons/granddaughters	el maga/mana nieto(s)	el maga/mana nieta(s)
the professors	el maga/mana professor(es)	el maga/mana profesora(s)
the councilors	el maga/mana consejal(es)	el maga/mana consejala(s)

Again, this rule is not rigid (especially in the Zamboangueño formal mode). The articles 'los' or 'las' do exist sometimes before nouns that are pluralized in the Spanish manner, and their use is quite accepted:

**los caballeros, los días, las noches, los chavacanos, los santos, las mañanas, las almujadas, las mesas, las plumas, las cosas**

When in doubt, it is always safe to use 'el' and 'maga or mana' to pluralize singular nouns:

**el maga/mana caballero(s), el maga/mana día(s), el maga/mana noche(s), el maga/mana chavacano(s), el maga/mana santo(s), el maga/mana día(s) que viene** (this is a phrase; 'el maga/mana mañana' is uncommon), **el maga/mana almujada(s), el maga/mana mesa(s), el maga/mana pluma(s)**

In Chavacano, it is common for some nouns to become doubled when pluralized (called *Reduplication*, a characteristic of the Malayo-Polynesian family of languages):

**el maga cosa-cosa** (el maga cosa/s is common), **el maga casa casa** (el maga casa is common), **el maga gente gente** (el maga gente is common), **el maga juego juego** (el maga juego is common)

But note that in some cases, this "reduplication" signifies a difference in meaning. For example, 'el maga bata' means 'the children' but 'el maga bata-bata' means one's followers or subordinates, as is a gang or mob.

In general, the suffixes -s, -as, -os to pluralize nouns in Spanish have also almost disappeared in Chavacano. However, the formation of plural nouns with suffixes ending in -s, -as, and -os are accepted. Basically, the singular form of the noun is retained, and it becomes plural because of the preceding modifier/plural marker 'maga' or 'mana':

**el maga/mana caballeros** (accepted)  
**el maga/mana caballero** (correct)  
**el maga/mana días** (accepted)  
**el maga/mana día** (correct)

Adding the suffix -es to some nouns is quite common and accepted. Nouns ending in -cion can also be pluralized by adding the suffix -es:

**el maga meses, el maga mujeres, el maga mayores, el maga tentaciones, el maga contestaciones, el maga naciones, el maga organizaciones**

However, it is safer to use the general rule (when in doubt) of retaining the singular form of the noun preceded by the modifier/plural marker 'maga' or 'mana':

**el maga mes, el maga mujer, el maga mayor, el maga tentación, el maga contestación, el maga nación, el maga organización**

## Pronouns

Chavacano pronouns are based on Spanish and native sources; many of the pronouns are not used in either but may be derived in part.

In contrast to the other varieties of Chavacano, the variety spoken in Zamboanga uses more pronouns derived from a native Philippine language (I.e. Hiligaynon) in addition to Spanish. In Zamboangueño, there are three different levels of usage for certain pronouns depending on the level of familiarity between the speaker and the addressee, the status of both in family and society, or the mood of the speaker and addressee at the particular moment: *common*, *familiar*, and *formal*. The common forms are, particularly in the second and third person plural, derived from Cebuano while most familiar and formal forms are from Spanish. The *common forms* are used to address a person below or of equal social or family status or to someone is who is acquainted. The common forms are used to regard no formality or courtesy in conversation. Its use can also mean rudeness, impoliteness or offensiveness. The *familiar forms* are used to address someone of equal social or family status. It indicates courtesy, and is commonly used in public conversations, the broadcast media, and in education. The *formal forms* are used to address someone older and/or higher in social or family status. It is the form used in writing.

Additionally, Zamboangueño is the only variety of Chavacano which distinguishes between the inclusive we (*kita*) – including the person spoken to (the addressee) – and the exclusive we (*kame*) – excluding the person spoken to (the addressee) – in the first person plural except in the formal form where *nosotros* is used for both.

## Personal (nominative/subjective case) pronouns

Below is a table comparing the personal pronouns in three varieties of Chavacano.

	Zamboangueño	Caviteño	Bahra	Castellano Abakay (de Davao)
1st person singular	yo	yo		yo (Chino, Japón) ako (Chino)
2nd person singular	[e]vo[s] (common)/(informal) tú (familiar) usted (formal)	vo/bo tu ustedé	vo/bo ustedé	usted vos
3rd person singular	él ele	eli		él
1st person plural	kamé (exclusive/common/familiar) kitá (inclusive/common/familiar) nosotros (formal)	nisos	mijotro mihotro motro	nosotros (Chino, Japón)
2nd person plural	kamó (common) vosotros (familiar) ustedes (formal)	vusos busos	buhotro bujotro ustedi tedi	ustedes vosotros
3rd person plural	silá (common/familiar) ellos (formal)	iilos	lojotro lohotro lotro	ellos

### Possessive pronouns (Chavacano de Zamboanga, Castellano Abakay)

The usage modes also exist in the possessive pronouns especially in Zamboangueño. *Amon*, *Aton*, *ila* and *inyo* are obviously of Hiligaynon but not Cebuano origins, and when used as pronouns, they are of either the common or familiar mode. The inclusive and exclusive characteristics peculiar to Zamboangueño appear again in the 1st person plural. Below is a table of the possessive pronouns in the Chavacano de Zamboanga:

	Zamboangueño	Castellano Abakay (de Davao)
1st person singular	mi mío de mi de mío di mio/di mío	mi mío
2nd person singular	de vos (common) de tu (familiar) tuyo (familiar) de tuyó/di tuyó (familiar) de usted (formal)	de tu
3rd person singular	su suyo de su de suyo/di suyo	ese (Chino, Japón) de iya (Chino)
1st person plural	de amón/diamon (common/familiar) (exclusive) de atón/diaton (common/familiar) (inclusive) nuestro (formal) de/di nuestro (formal)	nuestro
2nd person plural	de iño/di inyo (common) de vosotros (familiar) de ustedes (formal)	vos
3rd person plural	de ila (common/familiar) de ellos/di ellos (formal)	de ellos

### Verbs

In Zamboangueño, Chavacano verbs are mostly Spanish in origin. In contrast with the other varieties, there is rarely a Zamboangueño verb that is based on or has its origin from other Philippine languages. Hence, verbs contribute much of the Spanish vocabulary in Chavacano de Zamboanga.

Generally, the simple form of the Zamboangueño verb is based upon the infinitive of the Spanish verb, minus the final /r/. For example, *continuar*, *hablar*, *poner*, *recibir*, and *llevar* become *continuá*, *hablá*, *poné*, *recibí*, and *llevá* with the accent called "ácento agudo" on the final syllable.

There are some rare exceptions. Some verbs are not derived from infinitives but from words that are technically Spanish phrases or from other Spanish verbs. For example, *dar* (give) does not become 'da' but *dale* (give) (literally in Spanish, to "give it" [verb phrase]). In this case, *dale* has nothing to do with the Spanish infinitive *dar*. The Chavacano *brinca* (to hop) is from Spanish *brincar* which means the same thing.

### Verb tenses - simple tenses

Chavacano of Zamboangueño uses the words *ya* (from Spanish *ya* [already]), *ta* (from Spanish *está* [is]), and *ay* plus the simple form of the verb to convey the basic tenses of past, present, and future respectively:

English infinitive	Spanish infinitive	Zamboangueño infinitive	Past tense	Present tense	Future tense
to sing	cantar	cantá	ya cantá	ta cantá	ay cantá
to drink	beber	bebé	ya bebé	ta bebé	ay bebé
to sleep	dormir	dormí	ya dormí	ta dormí	ay dormí
to ask (of something)	pedir	pedí	ya pedí	ta pedí	ay pedí

Caviteño uses the words *ya*, *ta*, and *di* plus the simple form of the verb to convey the basic tenses of *past*, *present*, and *future* respectively:

English infinitive	Spanish infinitive	Caviteño infinitive	Past tense	Present tense	Future tense
to sing	cantar	cantá	ya cantá	ta cantá	di cantá
to drink	beber	bebé	ya bebé	ta bebé	di bebé
to sleep	dormir	dormí	ya dormí	ta dormí	di dormí
to ask (of something)	pedir	pedí	ya pedí	ta pedí	di pedí

While Bahra uses the words *a*, *ta*, and *di* plus the simple form of the verb to convey the basic tenses of *past*, *present*, and *future* respectively:

English infinitive	Spanish infinitive	Bahra infinitive	Past tense	Present tense	Future tense
to sing	cantar	cantá	a cantá	ta cantá	di cantá
to drink	beber	bebé	a bebé	ta bebé	di bebé
to sleep	dormir	dormí	a dormí	ta dormí	di dormí
to ask (of something)	pedir	pedí	a pedí	ta pedí	di pedí

Unlike in the Zamboangueño, Caviteño, and Bahra, Castellano Abakay (Davaoeño) doesn't have the *ya* and *ta* prefix. The infinitives and their conjugations are somehow retained, and there are some that have simplified conjugations:

English infinitive	Spanish infinitive	Castellano Abakay infinitive	Past tense	Present tense	Future tense
to sing	cantar	cantar	cantó	canta	cantá
to drink	beber	beber	bibío	bebe	bebé
to sleep	dormir	dormir	durmió	duerme	dormí
to ask (of something)	pedir	pedir	pidió	pide	pedí

### Perfect constructions

In Zamboangueño, there are three ways to express that the verb is in the *present perfect*. First, *ya* can appear both before and after the main verb to express that in the present perspective, the action has already been completed somewhere in the past with the accent falling on the final *ya*. Second, *ta* and *ya* can appear before and after the verb respectively to express that the action was expected to happen in the past (but did not happen), is still expected to happen in the present, and actually the expectation has been met (the verb occurs in the present). And third, a verb between *ta* and *pa* means an action started in the past and still continues in the present:

Zamboangueño past perfect	Zamboangueño present perfect	Zamboangueño future perfect
ya cantá ya.	ta cantá pa. / ta canta ya.	ay cantá ya.
ya bebé ya.	ta bebé pa. / ta Bebe ya.	ay bebé ya.
ya dormí ya.	ta dormí pa. / ta dormi ya.	ay dormí ya.
ya pedí ya.	ya pedí pa. / ya pedí ya.	ay pedí ya.

The *past perfect* exists in Zamboangueño. The words *antes* (before) and *despues* (after) can be used between two sentences in the simple past form to show which verb came first. The words *antes* (before) and *despues* (after) can also be used between a sentence in the present perfect using *ya* + verb + *ya* and another sentence in the simple past tense:

Past perfect (Zamboangueño)	Past perfect (English)
Ya mirá kame el película antes de ya comprá con el maga chichirías.	We had watched the movie before we bought the snacks.

Past perfect (Zamboangueño)	Past perfect (English)
Ya mirá ya kame el película despues ya comprá kame con el maga chichirías.	We had watched the movie and then we bought the snacks.

Zamboangueño Chavacano uses a verb between "hay" and "ya" to denote the *future perfect* and *past perfect* respectively:

Future perfect (Zamboangueño)	Future perfect (English)
Hay mirá ya kame el película si hay llegá vosotros.	We will have watched the movie when you arrive.

Zamboangueño Chavacano also uses a verb between "ta" and "ya" to denote the *present perfect*:

Present perfect (Zamboangueño)	Present perfect (English)
Ta mirá ya kame con el película mientras ta esperá con vosotros.	We are already watching the movie while waiting for you.

### Passive and active voice

To form the Zamboangueño Chavacano active voice, Zamboangueños follow the pattern:

**El maga soldao ya mata con el criminal** The soldiers killed the criminal.

As illustrated above, active (causative) voice is formed by placing the doer *el maga soldao* before the verb phrase *ya mata* and then the object *el criminal* as indicated by the particle *con*

Traditionally, Zamboangueño does not have a passive construction of its own.<sup>[19]</sup>

# Archaic Spanish words and false friends

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Chabacano has preserved plenty of archaic Spanish phrases and words in its vocabulary that modern Spanish no longer uses; for example:

"En denantes" which means 'a while ago' (Spanish: "hace un tiempo"). Take note that "En denantes" is an archaic Spanish phrase. Modern Spanish would express the phrase as "hace poco tiempo" or "hace un tiempo", but Chabacano still retains this archaic Spanish phrase and many other archaic Spanish words. This word is still being used in some areas of southern Spain.

"Masquen"/"Masquin" means 'even (if)' or 'although'. In Spanish, "mas que" is an archaic Spanish phrase meaning 'although', nowadays replaced by the Spanish word "aunque".<sup>[20]</sup>

In Chavacano, the Spanish language is commonly called "castellano". Chavacano speakers, especially older Zamboangueños, call the language as "castellano" implying the original notion as the language of Castile while "español" is used to mean a Spaniard or a person from Spain.

The pronoun "vos" is alive in Chavacano. While "vos" was used in the highest form of respect before the 16th century in classical Spanish and is quite archaic nowadays in modern Spanish (much like the English "thou"), in Chavacano it is used at the common level of usage (lower than tu, which is used at the familiar level) in the same manner of the works of Miguel de Cervantes and in the same manner as in certain Latin American countries such as Argentina (informally and in contrast with usted, which is used formally). Chavacano followed the development of vos in same manner as in Latin America – (the voseo) or, incidentally, as with English "thou" vs. "you".

"Ansina" means 'like that' or 'that way'. In modern Spanish, "así" is the evolved form of this archaic word. The word "ansina" can still be heard among the aged in Mexico and is the only way of expressing this meaning in Ladino.

On the other hand, some words from the language spoken in Spain have evolved or have acquired totally different meanings in Chavacano. Hence, for Castilian speakers who would encounter Chavacano speakers, some words familiar to them have become false friends. Some examples of false friends are:

"Siguro"/"Seguro" means 'maybe'. In Spanish, "seguro" means 'sure', 'secure', or 'stable', although it could imply probability as well, as in the phrase, "Seguramente vendrá" (Probably he will come).

"Siempre" means 'of course'. In Spanish, "siempre" means 'always'.

"Firmi" means 'always'. In Spanish, "firme" means 'firm' or 'steady'.

## See also

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- [Philippine Spanish](#)
- [Spanish Filipino](#)
- [Spanish-based creole languages](#)
- [Spanish East Indies](#)
- [Hispanic](#)
- [Chavacano Wikipedia](#)

## Codes

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ISO 639-1: *none*  
ISO 639-2: **crp**<sup>[6]</sup>  
ISO 639-3: **cbk**<sup>[21]</sup>  
SIL code: **cbk**<sup>[21]</sup>

## Footnotes

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## External links

- An abridged Chavacano dictionary (<http://www.zamboanga.com/chavacano/index.html>)
- Chavacano Lessons with Audio (<http://www.wikapinoy.com/lessons/course/view.php?id=9>)
- FilipinoKastila - Database of Chavacano academic articles (<http://filipinokastila.tripod.com/chabig.html>)
- 1883 letter (<http://schuchardt.uni-graz.at/id/letter/1360>) – correspondence of Jacinto Juanmartí to German linguist Hugo Schuchardt dated 19 November 1883 containing text of chavacano spoken in Cotabato

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